

GOOD NEIGHBOR ENVIRONMENTAL BOARD U.S.-MEXICO BORDER REGION MONTHLY ROUND-UP

Volume 2, Number 8
October 2001



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Good Neighbor Environmental Board Meetings for 2002

- February 20-21 - Calexico or El Centro, CA
- May 22-23 - Juarez, CH
- October 9-10 - Nogales, AZ

Five New Board Members Appointed by EPA Administrator Whitman

EPA Administrator Whitman has offered appointments to five individuals as new members. We are very pleased to have them with us and welcome them to the Board.

Our new members are as follows: Larry Allen, Board Member, Malpai Borderlands Group, a border-region conservation group comprised of representatives from the ranching and grazing sectors; Gedi Cibas, Border Affairs Coordinator for the New Mexico Environment Department; Bill Fry, Vice President, Environmental Affairs, H-E-B Grocery, San Antonio, TX; Dale Phillips, Vice Chair, Cocopah Tribe, Arizona/Sonora border region; and Diane Rose, Mayor, City of Imperial Beach, CA.

Recap of final 2001 Good Neighbor Meeting: Laredo, Texas, October 10-11

The third and last meeting of the Good Neighbor Environmental Board during 2001 took place in Laredo, Texas on October 10-11, 2001. It was well-attended by local officials and members of the public, and it received news coverage from two local television stations, Univision and a local affiliate of NBC News. The meeting was dedicated to the memory of former Board member Linda Smith, who tragically died on August 24, 2001.

The first day of the Laredo meeting began with greetings from Eliseo Valdez, Jr., Mayor Pro Tempore of District 5 of Laredo. Then, a series of speakers addressed local environmental issues such as truck crossings at the local international bridges, emergency preparedness, warehouse storage of hazardous materials, and conservation-based uses of ranching and grazing land in the area. Speakers also included a representative from the Texas Department of Transportation and the Administrator for the Kickapoo Tribe.

During that afternoon, the Board hosted two public comment sessions. The first was a general session that covered topics ranging from technical training to forest conservation; the second session was devoted exclusively to obtaining public input on how to improve the performance of BECC and NADBank. Federal officials from the State Department, Treasury, and EPA were present to hear from more than a dozen concerned citizens and local officials from both sides of the border. These comments will be incorporated into a binational working

group report due to be submitted to Presidents Bush and Fox by October 31st.

The morning of the second day was set aside for a business meeting. After lunch, a representative of the new border-region advisory group to SEMARNAT gave an update on the status of setting up the group. The meeting ended with a tour of the Laredo Community College Environmental Science Center.

Latest Good Neighbor Letter on BECC-NADBank

The Board decided at its Laredo meeting to submit its own input to the Binational Working Group charged with reporting to Presidents Bush and Fox by October 31st on how to improve the performance of BECC and NADBank. EPA and State Department Board members recused themselves because their agencies are part of the Binational Working Group. Text follows:

October 26, 2001

Dear Representatives of the Environmental Protection Agency, the State Department, and the Department of Treasury,

The Good Neighbor Environmental Board (GNEB) commends the Bush Administration for conducting public comment sessions on how to strengthen the Border Environmental Cooperation Commission (BECC) and the North American Development Bank (NADBank). Public input is critical to an open evaluation process. As you may know, GNEB co-hosted one of these special sessions during our October 10, 2001 meeting in Laredo, Texas. Officials from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the State Department, and Treasury were present to hear the input on behalf of the binational working group charged with reporting back to Presidents Bush and Fox by October 31st.

The Board also wishes to provide its own input into the public comment process. In its capacity as a federal advisory board that makes recommendations to President Bush and Congress on environmental infrastructure and sustainable development issues along the U.S. border with Mexico, the Board* recommends that the following steps be taken to strengthen BECC and NADBank performance:

1. Continue to support BECC and NADBank as independent, sister institutions but improve their singular effectiveness and their collective ability to support infrastructure development. Do not combine boards for the two institutions. Instead, consider developing an integrated subset of the two boards to jointly resolve common issues and strengthen progress. For both institutions, strengthen strategic planning to address future border-region growth. Maintain the involvement of EPA, SEMARNAT, and the IBWC.
2. For the BECC, maintain public input as a critical factor in the approval process. Continue to focus on technical assistance, which is highly valued by small communities in particular, and ensure that technical assistance continues beyond the certification phase through project completion and operation. Clarify and communicate BECC policies and procedures so that communities clearly understand every step in the certification and construction process and can proceed with less dependence on staff.
3. For the NADBank, encourage policies and procedures that will make it more service-oriented and responsive to communities. Put more resources into outright grants, repayable grants, and low-interest loans so that NADBank loans are more affordable to the economically-disadvantaged communities it was designed to serve. Ensure that grants and loans are processed within a reasonable and specific time frame. Ensure that NADBank more effectively leverages additional funding as part of the community development process.

Finally, on a more general note, we understand that the deadline for the public comment period is October 31st. We are concerned about creating such a short time frame to determine the future of two of the most pivotal border institutions. We encourage you to extend the deadline for public input. More time is needed to fully develop a strategic approach that reflects full public input and maximizes the effectiveness of BECC and NADBank.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please contact either myself, the Chair of the Board, or Elaine Koerner, who serves as the Board's Designated Federal Officer. Our contact details are above.

Sincerely, Judith Espinosa, Chair

cc President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Speaker of the House

EPA News

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EPA Administrator Christine Whitman has appointed Wayne Nastri as the EPA Region 9 Regional Administrator. Past positions include serving as the Governor of California's appointee to the Governing Board of the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

President Bush has announced his intention to nominate J. Paul Gilman to be EPA Assistant Administrator for Research and Development. Among Gilman's previous positions: Administrative Assistant to U.S. Senator Pete Domenici of New Mexico. In addition, five of President Bush's other nominees for senior positions at EPA have been confirmed: Stephen Johnson as Assistant Administrator (AA) for the Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances; Jeffrey Holmstead as AA for the Office of Air and Radiation; G. Tracy Mehan as AA for the Office of Water; Judith Ayres as AA for the Office of International Activities; and Marianne Horinko as AA for the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response.

Border Region News

from the Good Neighbor Environmental Board
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****Note: The items in the section below have been cut-and-pasted and compiled from other documents. Please check a primary source to ensure complete accuracy. Web sites may have to be re-entered.****

Air - EPA latest annual summary of air quality trends says that air quality in the United States maintained its steady improvement through the year 2000, but that some areas of the country continue to be faced with challenges. It says progress has been slowest for smog and fine particles. See www.epa.gov/airtrends

BECC - Five projects with an estimated budget of \$58.2 million were certified at the last BECC Board of Directors' meeting in Mexico City on October 16th, 2001. They are: rehabilitation of the sewage system in Tijuana, Baja California; improvements to the solid waste management system in San Luis Rio Colorado, Sonora; used tires management, collection, shredding, and final disposition in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua; solid waste management in Ojinaga, Chihuahua; and construction of a water treatment plant in Raymondville, Texas. See www.cocof.org

Book on Border Management Strategies - Two Migration Institute scholars have published a new book called "Caught in the Middle" Border Communities in an Era of Globalization." They analyze the findings of case studies of five international borders, including the U.S.-Mexico border. See www.migrationpolicy.org

Children's Health - The executive leadership of the Presidential Task Force on Children's Environmental Health and Safety held its first meeting under the Bush Administration on October 24, 2001. The Task Force will coordinate ongoing federal research projects designed to investigate the causes of childhood asthma. See www.hhs.gov/news

EPA and NIEHS have announced four new children's environmental health research centers to be located around the nation. One of them will be based in Davis, California, at the Center for the Study of Environmental

Factors in the Etiology of Autism.

The environment ministers of Canada, Mexico and the United States have named the members of the Expert Advisory Board on Children's Health and the Environment in North America in response to a CEC resolution. Three members are from each country. One of the three U.S. members is from a border state: Beatriz Barraza-Roppe of the San Diego Colaborativo SABER project.

Database on Water - River Network has launched its new Clean Water Act database, an upgraded version of its former State-by-State Clean Water Act pages. See www.rivernetwork.org/cleanwater/cwa_search.asp

Emergency Response - The McAllen Fire Department, on behalf of its neighboring departments and Sister City of Reynosa, was presented the Fire Service Award for Excellence - Award of Merit. The award recognizes United Response 2000, the largest emergency response readiness exercise in the history of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Enforcement - IBP Inc., the world's largest meatpacker, has agreed to pay the United States \$4.1 million in penalties for violating the nation's environmental laws. Under the settlement, one of the company's activities will be to perform clean-up and plant closure work at its former facility in Palestine, Texas.

Energy - EPA has joined with 17 Fortune 500 companies, city and state governments and nonprofits in Washington, D.C. to create a new electric power generation partnership called the Combined Heat and Power Partnership. Contact: bryson.joe@epa.gov.

Fellowships - The Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at the University of California, San Diego, invites proposals focused on sustainable development and the environment along the border, especially supply and management of water resources; environmental health; and/or natural resource management and land use. Deadline: January 1, 2002. See www.usmex.ucsd.edu

Grants - U.S. EPA is requesting border-region grant proposals from U.S. county and city governments, U.S. Councils of governments, U.S. Indian Tribes, U.S. community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, U.S. public schools and universities. The goals are linked to the Border XXI Program and the grants will be managed by EPA Regions 6 and 9. Deadline: November 5th, 2001.

International Community Foundation (ICF) is requesting proposals for the 2001-2002 grant cycle of its Border Environmental Fund. Submission deadline: November 15, 2001. Contact: jkluver@icfdn.org

American Rivers - NOAA Community-Based Restoration Program Partnership Program is accepting proposals for river restoration grants. Deadlines for the two cycles are December 1, 2001 and April 1, 2002. See www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/community/index.htm

NADBank - The North American Development Bank has received an additional \$84 million for its Border Environmental Infrastructure Fund (BEIF) grant program from the U.S. EPA. With this contribution, EPA has provided a total of \$336 million to the Bank's program since 1997.

Water - EPA is seeking public comment on its draft strategy for waterborne microbial disease. Deadline for written comments is November 15, 2001. See www.epa.gov/ost/criteria/microbialdraft.pdf

Website about Texas - A new website called the Texas Environmental Profiles Website has been developed jointly by the Texas Center for Policy Studies and Environmental Defense. It includes information on the condition of the Texas environment, data on counties, and a mapping tool. See www.texasep.org

Border Issues Events Calendar

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Notes: Event listings below have been drawn from other lists and may have changed. Please check a primary source for more details. Events specific to border region are in bold. Web sites may have to be re-entered. Please notify Editor if dates are incorrect or have changed.

- Nov 5** Public input meeting on BECC/NADBank, Piedras Negras, Coahuila. Contact: conscaia@prodigy.net.mx
- Nov 8** EPA San Diego Border Office Open House, San Diego, CA.
- Nov 9** PA EPCRA/TRI training workshop, San Francisco, CA. Contact: browning.adam@epa.gov
- Nov 12** Public input meeting on BECC/NADBank, Reynosa, Tamaulipas. Contact: jsuarez@rectoria.uat.mx
- Nov 12-15** AWRA's Annual Water Resources Conference, Albuquerque, NM. Contact mike@awra.org
- Nov 12-16** DOI U.S.-Mexico Field Coordinating Committee meeting, San Diego, CA.
- Nov 14** EPA El Paso Border Office Monthly Forum, El Paso, TX.
- Nov 21** EPA EPCRA/TRI training workshop, Dallas, TX. Contact: layne.warren@epa.gov
- Nov 26-30** Colorado River Soil and Water Conservation Conference, San Luis Rio Colorado, Sonora
- Nov 29-30** CEC symposium, "Environmental Challenges and Opportunities of the North American Electricity Market." Contact: carrillo.ocase@epa.gov
- Nov 30** CEC JPAC session, San Diego, CA. See www.cec.org.
- Dec 6** BECC Board Meeting, El Paso, TX. See www.cocef.org
- Dec 6-7** 2nd National Conference for Science and the Environment: Sustainable Communities: Science and Solutions, Washington, D.C. See www.NCSEonline.org
- Dec 11-13** Building Native Nations II Conference: Environment, Natural Resources, and Governance, Tucson, AZ. Sponsored by Udall Center. See <http://udallcenter.arizona.edu/conference/bnn2.htm>
- Dec 12** EPA El Paso Border Office Monthly Forum, El Paso, TX.
- Dec 13** NADBank Board of Directors meeting, San Antonio, TX.
- Dec 17-21** International Conference on Pesticide Use & Health, NIH, Bethesda, MD. Contact: soeh@degnon.org.
- 2002**
- Jan 9-11** U.S.-Mexico RC&D Border Council meeting, Tucson, AZ
- Jan 10** EPA San Diego Border Office Open House, San Diego, CA.
- Feb 14** EPA San Diego Border Office Open House, San Diego, CA.
- Feb 23-27** Watershed 2002, Fort Lauderdale, FL. See www.wef.org
- June 4-7** U.S.-Mexico Border Health Association Annual Meeting, Chihuahua, Chihuahua
- July 23-26** Universities Council on Water Resources Annual Conference, "Integrated Transboundary Water Management," Traverse City, Michigan. See www.uwin.siu.edu/ucowr/

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